



## **NBHP Testimony to the Texas House of Representatives Human Services Committee | Public Testimony for HB 133 | 03/23/2021**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members,

My name is Sydney Carter, and I am the Mental Health Policy Fellow at the Network of Behavioral Health Providers (NBHP). **NBHP is a collaborative of the leadership of over 40 public and private, for-profit and non-profit mental health and substance use disorder services providers** in greater Houston. I am pleased to be providing testimony concerning HB 133, relating to the Medicaid eligibility of certain women after a pregnancy.

Currently, Texas allows low-income women to receive health care coverage under Medicaid during pregnancy and up to 60 days post-partum. This cut-off leaves many of these new mothers with a significant coverage gap at a critical time of their baby's development. National studies show a percentage of new mothers who could not access health care fell sharply after Medicaid expansion: **there was a 41% decrease<sup>i</sup> in mothers with an unmet need for prescription drugs due to cost, as well as a 44% decrease in mothers who were uninsured.<sup>ii</sup>** Expanding Medicaid coverage so that low-income women can remain enrolled in continuous coverage before, during, and after pregnancy, is **critically important for the health and future of the new family.**

Uninsured and underinsured pregnant women and new mothers are **among the most vulnerable populations** across the nation. Many mothers face an extremely tumultuous period of life after birth, including changes in income, employment, relationship status, and beyond. These pressures and stressors can have a serious impact upon the health and wellbeing of new mothers:

- Post-partum depression is extremely prevalent among women in Texas; an estimated **1 in 10 Texas mothers will experience postpartum depression.<sup>iii</sup>**
- Evidence suggests that women with substance use disorders are **more likely to experience relapse and overdose 7-12 months post-partum.<sup>iv</sup>**
- A recent study found that failing to treat mental health conditions **cost Texas \$2.2 billion for one year of childbirths.<sup>v</sup>**

A new mother having longer-term access to quality care to address behavioral health and other health care needs is critically important for the welfare of the new family. ***NBHP urges the Legislature to pass HB 133 to extend coverage for pregnant women and new mothers up to one year after delivery.*** Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/medicaid-expansion-improves-postpartum-coverage-access-to-care>

<sup>ii</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.texashealth.org/en/Health-and-Wellness/Women-and-Infants/Postpartum-Depression>

<sup>iv</sup> Wisner KL, Sit DKY, McShea MC. Onset Timing, Thoughts of Self-harm, and Diagnoses in Postpartum Women with Screen-Positive Depression Findings. JAMA Psychiatry 2013;70(5):490-498.

<sup>v</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5728d34462cd94b84dc567ed/t/60401649d964b7095ce349eb/1614812746062/mathematica-issue-brief-tx-mmhc.pdf>